

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 INR-10 L-03 ACDA-12

NSAE-00 PA-01 SS-15 SP-02 TRSE-00 DODE-00 NSCE-00

SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 OMB-01 /062 W

-----026682 051529Z /45

O 051441Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6403

INFO USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE

USNMR SHAPE PRIORITY

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER PRIORITY

CINCLANT NORFOLK VA PRIORITY

S E C R E T BRUSSELS 08711

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MPOL, NATO, BE

SUBJECT: NATO LONG-TERM DEFENSE PROGRAM (LTDP)

REF: A) STATE 113469, B) USNATO 4490

1. WE MADE DEMARCHE REQUESTED BY REFTEL A, SUPPLEMENTED BY SUGGESTIONS IN REFTEL B, TO BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY CHIEF OF NATO AFFAIRS, ERIK BAL, ON MAY 5. WE ALSO PROVIDED BAL WITH A NON-PAPER SO THAT HE MIGHT STUDY U.S. POSITIONS AND REQUESTS MORE CLOSELY.

2. BAL MADE THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS AFTER LISTENING TO OUR PRESENTATION:

A) THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT AGREES FULLY WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF THE LTDP. IT RECOGNIZES THAT SUCH A PROGRAM IS NECESSARY FOR THE DEFENSE OF EUROPE AND WANTS TO PARTICIPATE IN A MEANINGFUL COMMON DEFENSE EFFORT. IT FURTHER SEES CLEARLY THAT NEW SOLUTIONS ARE NECESSARY AND LOOKS ON THE LTDP AS A VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION TO WORKING OUT SUCH SOLUTIONS ON A MULTILATERAL BASIS.

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B) THAT SAID, BAL CAUTIONED US THAT ONE GENERAL PROBLEM WAS TO AVOID PROVOKING REACTIONS WHICH COULD LEAD EITHER TO A SPLIT BETWEEN ALLIANCE PARTNERS OR TO THE REJECTION OF PARTS OF THE LTDP. THIS COULD RESULT FROM FORCING COUNTRIES TO MAKE DECISIONS BEFORE THEIR DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONDITIONS PERMITTED THEM TO DO SO WITH FULL GOVERNMENTAL SUPPORT. BAL TOLD US THAT HE REALIZED THAT THIS "SERMON" WAS REPETITIOUS AND THAT HE COULD

FULLY APPRECIATE USG "IMPATIENCE" WITH ITS ALLIES, INCLUDING BELGIUM, BUT THAT SUCH WAS A FACT OF LIFE TODAY.

C) BAL TOLD US THAT THE BELGIANS ACCEPTED OUR ARGUMENT THAT AGREEMENT ON THE LTDP AT THE SUMMIT WOULD NOT CONSTITUTE A "BLANK CHECK".

HOWEVER, HE SAID, THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS HAD TO BE DEALT WITH. THESE, HE TOLD US, ARE STILL UNDER DISCUSSION IN BELGIUM AND WOULD BE FURTHER REFINED THE WEEK OF MAY 8 IN VARIOUS INTER-MINISTERIAL MEETINGS ALREADY SCHEDULED. HE COMMENTED THAT THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT WAS FULLY AWARE OF ITS COMMITMENTS TO NATO, BUT THAT OTHER INTERNAL POLITICAL PRESSURES ALSO HAD TO BE CONSIDERED (E.G. THE GOVERNMENT RECENTLY FELT OBLIGED TO RESOLVE A SHORT STRIKE OF POSTAL EMPLOYEES WITH A WAGE INCREASE AND CUT IN HOURS).

D) BAL SAID THAT EVEN ON THOSE ISSUES ON WHICH NO SUBSTANTIAL COSTS TO THE GOVERNMENT WERE INVOLVED (E.G. DEPOTS), SERIOUS POLITICAL, LEGISLATIVE, AND EVEN CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS WERE INVOLVED, WHICH HAD TO BE RESOLVED THROUGH PATIENT, ARDUOUS, AND TIME-CONSUMING INTERNAL DISCUSSIONS. HE AGAIN CAUTIONED US NOT TO PRESS FOR QUICK DECISIONS GIVEN HIS FEAR THAT SUCH PRESSURES WOULD BE "COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE" TO OUR COMMON GOALS.

E) BAL WENT ON TO COMMENT THAT THE BELGIANS HOPED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO CONFRONTATIONS OR OPEN DISAGREEMENTS AT THE WASHINGTON SUMMIT
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MEETING ON THE LTDP. HE SAID THAT HE HAD NOTED A HARDENING IN THE FRENCH POSITION ON SUMMIT PREPARATIONS AND IMPLIED THAT THE BELGIANS WOULD FIND A NATO-FRENCH SPLIT HIGHLY UNCOMFORTABLE. BAL SAID THAT NO DECISION HAD YET BEEN TAKEN ON MINISTER OF DEFENSE VANDEN BOEYNANT'S PARTICIPATION IN APPROPRIATE SUMMIT MEETINGS (BRUSSELS 8145). HE SAID THE DECISION WOULD HINGE ON THE OUTCOME OF THE DPC MEETING.

2. COMMENT: THE TWO MAIN BELGIAN CONCERNS ARE CLEARLY, FIRST, NOT TO BE FORCED INTO MAKING PREMATURE SUBSTANTIVE DECISIONS BECAUSE OF THE PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS OF THIS FORTHCOMING SUMMIT, AND SECONDLY, NOT TO HAVE THE SUMMIT PROVOKE AN OPEN DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN NATO PARTNERS, EITHER BETWEEN NATO AND FRANCE OR BETWEEN SOME NATO COUNTRIES AND THE USG. OLSEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LOBBYING, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, REGIONAL DEFENSE ORGANIZATIONS, MILITARY PLANS, MINISTERIAL MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BRUSSE08711
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780192-0551
Format: TEL
From: BRUSSELS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780590/aaaacyzu.tel
Line Count: 108
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 97dfcba3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 113469, 78 USNATO 4490
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2785446
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NATO LONG-TERM DEFENSE PROGRAM (LTDP)
TAGS: MPOL, BE, NATO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/97dfcba3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014